

TEXT 1

Start of college life: how I coped with fear

For the last two years I've been working really hard to pass all my exams successfully and to get accepted to college. And yet college seemed to be the scariest thing that I could think of. Whenever I thought about it, my stomach would immediately begin to spin in circles. Although I was ready to go off and be by myself and meet new people, I was scared to death at the same time. I pictured hard classes that I wouldn't be able to keep up with, people that wouldn't like me, long hikes to get to my classes, and horrible food. I couldn't imagine leaving the security of my own room, my own stuff where I want it, my friends that I've spent practically my whole life with, my family who put up with all my little quirks.

Everyone else that I talked to, however, didn't seem to have this problem. They all were thrilled at the thought of being on their own and not having to worry about their parents telling them what to do or not to do all the time. And, sure, the thought was extremely exciting to me as well, but how would I survive without my family and friends and the things that had taken me eighteen years to get used to?

The summer before I came to college was probably the most fun my friends and I ever had. We all knew that in September things would never be the same again and we had to make the most of it while we still could. As the end of August rolled around we knew that it was time to say goodbye and be on our way to our own independence. I packed up the memories of the last eighteen years of my life into about five suitcases and was ready to go. I still didn't feel like I was just as mature as my older college friends and I thought that I still looked like I was twelve years old.

We finally made it to the doors and began unloading my clothes and the eight million bags of food that my mom had packed for me. I still was unsure about sharing my room and not being able to have the privacy that I had back home. I was worried that the little habits that I had might annoy my roommate and that my roommate might have just as many annoying little habits that I might not be able to handle as well.

After I had all my things unpacked and put exactly where I wanted, my roommate and I decided to go around our hall and see whom we would be living with for the next two semesters. As we went around to different rooms and met different people my nervousness seemed to diminish. I began to realize that not everyone here knew everyone else and most were just as anxious and nervous about being here as I was. It worked. I started to feel better and was actually kind of excited about living here all by myself.

I still miss the security of living at home (and I wonder who would blame me for this feeling) and, most of all, home-cooked meals that are **nonexistent** here and the friends that I grew up with. But I know that we've all changed and those memories are just that – memories, no matter how pleasant they might be. And when times

get too tough, my mom is just a phone call away. But I'm not too quick to call her and have her solve my problems. I've learned that I can usually work things out by myself. I'm glad that I've gone through these changes in myself and it makes me realize that I don't need to fear change, that it's just a part of life that everyone has to go through sometime.

TEXT 2

Do you believe in climate change?

This may seem like an odd question for a climate scientist to ask, but it is one I am constantly asked now. The typical discussion starts: "I know that the climate is changing, but hasn't it always changed through natural cycles?" Then they will often give an example, such as the medieval warm period to prove their point.

Those asking the question include a wide range of people I meet in the pub, friends, politicians and, increasingly, even some of those active in sustainable development and the renewable energy businesses. What I find interesting is that I have known many of these people for a long time and they never asked me this before.

Recent studies show that public acceptance of the scientific evidence for man-made climate change has decreased. However, the change is not that great. The difference I find in talking to people is that they feel better able to express their doubts.

This is very hard for scientists to understand. The scientific evidence that humanity is having an effect on the climate is overwhelming and increasing every year. Yet public perception of this is confused. People modify their beliefs about uncomfortable truth, they may have become bored of constantly hearing about climate change; or external factors such as the financial crisis may have played a role.

Around three years ago, I raised the issue of the way that science can be misused. In some cases scare stories in the media were over-hyping climate change, and I think we are paying the price for this now with a reaction the other way. I was concerned then that science is not always presented objectively by the media. What I don't think any of us appreciated at the time was the depth of disconnect between the scientific process and the public.

Which brings me to the question, should you believe in climate change? The first point to make is that it's not something you should believe or not believe in – this is a matter of science and therefore of evidence – and there's a lot of it out there. On an issue this important, I think people should look at that evidence and make their own mind up. We are often very influenced by our own personal experience. After a couple of cold winters in the UK, the common question was: "Has climate change stopped?" despite that fact that many other regions of the world were experiencing record warm temperatures. And 2010 was one of the warmest years on record. For real evidence of climate change, we have to look at the bigger picture.

You can see research by the Met Office that shows the evidence of man-made warming is even stronger than it was when the last report was published. A whole range of different datasets and independent analyses show the world is warming. There is a broad consensus that over the last half-century, warming has been rapid, and man-made greenhouse gas emissions are very likely to be the cause.

Ultimately, as the planet continues to warm, the issue of whether you believe in climate change will become more and more irrelevant. We will all experience the impacts of climate change in some way, so the evidence will be there in plain sight. The more appropriate questions for today are how will our climate change and how can we prepare for those changes? That's why it's important that climate scientists continue their work, and continue sharing their evidence and research so people can stay up to date – and make up their own minds.